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Giving back
Minden community members participated in the annual Fill a Cruiser campaign through the OPP this past weekend, donating items from local grocery stores to those in need. /TIM YANO staff photgrapher

Huge turnout for Minden Business Working Group

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

Last Wednesday, the roads were slick from snow throughout the day. With the Minden Business Working Group's meeting at 5:30 p.m. at the Dominion Hotel, the sun had already set.

Darkness and slippery roads; a nasty combo that causes fear of no one showing up.

I could have never been so wrong.

After struggling to find parking and getting to the Dominion Hotel, opening the door released an eruption of chatter.

Business owners from across the Township filled the dining room. Counting heads, there were around 80 people filling the seats, standing around the bar, and standing along the wall. More filled into the room as Dennis Pennie and Dave Woodcroft took to the podium to speak.

All gathered for one purpose: to come together as business owners, establish a communication network, and discuss a plan to make Minden a beautiful destination town.

A unification of community and commerce. A breath of reinvigorating life to Minden.

"We have invited you all here for an information session on what direction we as business owners want to take to increase business in the township,"

see ROCKCLIFFE page 12

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Library seeks clarification on budget numbers

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Leading up to the scheduled county budget deliberations on Dec. 10, the Haliburton County Public Library (HCPL) board held a special meeting on Dec. 3, which was offered both virtually and in-person.

"The intention of today is to decide as a group whether we would like to go back to county council at the next regular meeting with some kind of a counter-proposal to what was recommended by the council liaisons," opened Jennifer Dailloux, the vice chair of the HCPL library board and county councillor, "or whether we don't wish to do that, and I'd like to hear from everyone."

During the first presentation of the draft county budget to council on Nov. 26, library CEO Andrea Brown went in with an ask for $1,377,081 for the 2026 budget, which is a 9.77 per cent increase over last year. At the time, county council budget liaisons, comprised of Bob Carter, Murray Fearrey, and Warden Dave Burton, made the suggestion to knock the budget down to no more than $1,000,000. This was done in consideration of the surplus that the library has ended each fiscal year with in the past few budget talks.

Due to the fact that there are no capital expenses for the library, county liaisons noted that the surplus exists in the form of an alternative reserve.

"The typical practice when there is a surplus at the end of the year is to fold that surplus into the ongoing operation expenses for the next year," explained Dailloux during the Dec. 3 meeting, "or reallocate it somewhere so that there isn't a bump on the levy on the back of that retained portion of those surpluses."

The vice chair went on to share that a lot of the library reserve has not been made through reserve transfers for deliberate capital projects, but rather, it is an accumulation of the surpluses.

County liaisons made the suggestion to draw down those surpluses before increasing the overall budget for the library. "I think that's truly fair," said Dailloux. "That's a very astute observation."

"They're not really true reserves," noted Adele Espina, a member of the public who sits on the library board. "They are budget surpluses that have been mixed in with our reserves. At this point, I don't know whether we know what our true reserves are, and what the budget surpluses are mixed together."

Espina was seeking clarification from the county finance team to differentiate between the two. With the surplus hovering at $384,000, she noted that she does not believe there is a direct need for that at the board level right now, but that comes with some consideration. "As a taxpayer I would hope that reducing that surplus could happen over a period of years," she said. "My hope would be that they don't empty the cookie jar in a year."

Jacqueline Halupka, another member of the public who sits on the board, presented a warning about cutting budget numbers, even in light of reserve availability. She noted for years, the library has been allocated over one million dollars to go towards staffing, which is their number one expense. "Reducing staff is reducing programs," she said, "we would end up having a budget that is dismantling the library over the next few years. I think it's too short-sighted to say we'll take it all out of reserves … I really feel very uncomfortable with that."

"We're not talking about reserves today," clarified councillor Lisa Schell, who also sits on the HCPL board. "We're talking about a surplus."

Library CEO Andrea Brown noted that the reserves are not tracked separately. The reserves and the surplus go into the same account.

> *"We're fairly split down the middle. We've got some wishing for moderation and some wishing to rip off the band-aid.*
>
> — Jennifer Dailloux, HCPL Vice Chair

"I want it clear that we're not cleaning out the surplus or the reserves," said County Warden Dave Burton. "There's still going to be a hundred or more thousand in reserves. We're not just going to take it all."

"What we're here for is to determine whether or not the library is going to be negatively impacted by what we are doing," confirmed county councillor and HCPL board member Cec Ryall. "All we're looking at is not changing the operating expenditures for the library board, but merely where those expenditures are going to be funding. That's really what it boils down to."

Halupka chimed in to make the suggestion that other county departments utilize more of their budget from reserves to minimize the need for the library to pull a large percentage from their own reserves.

"The reserves for our different departments operate in a different way," said Dailloux. "The general principle across the board is that you would never use your reserves as general operating expenses. That's sort of rule number one."

Schell confirmed that many of the reserves are allocated for future purchases, such as bridge developments or ambulances.

Espina stepped in to remind the board that the surplus started with a mere $40,000 in 2019, and quickly jumped up to $200,000 throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was a notable decrease in operation based on mandated closures.

The current library board has been in place since 2023, and there has only been an increase of $100,000 of surplus in that time. "If we look at why we're not spending those salary dollars in the last few years, I think a lot of it has to do with staff leaving, and the library being unable to attract good candidates quickly," she said. "We have long periods of being short-staffed, and other staff have had to fill in these vacant positions, and the money hasn't been spent."

Espina shared that she finds it difficult to map out a plan when she knows that there will be a different board and council in the coming year.

"We're fairly split down the middle. We've got some wishing for moderation and some wishing to rip off the band-aid," noted Dailloux, referencing the options to either use up the reserve amount gradually over the coming years, or all at once.

For the moderated model, four of the eligible voting members raised their hands in agreement. Sitting council members on the board, including Walt McKechnie, Lisa Schell, Cec Ryall, and Dave Burton, voted in opposition to the moderated model.

Due to the fact that the vote was split, those opposed are named the winners, based on procedural bylaw. The conversation will be continuing for county councillors on Dec. 10 at the next regular meeting of council.

HHHS brings in new CEO

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) has welcomed a new president and CEO to the team.

Effective March 30, 2026, Jack Hutchison will be stepping into the role, which has been filled by Jennifer Burns West as interim CEO since Veronica Nelson left in September of this year.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jack to HHHS," said HHHS board chair Irene Odell in a press release shared on Friday, Dec. 5. "His deep experience in system transformation, his proven ability to lead complex operations, and his meaningful connection to this area make him an exceptional fit for our organization."

Hutchison originally hails from Haliburton County. In recent years, he has worked as senior vice president and chief operating officer at an integrated health authority, serving six Indigenous communities across the western James Bay coast.

"I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to return home to Haliburton County and serve our community," shared Hutchison in the press release. "HHHS has dedicated, passionate teams and a strong commitment to high-quality, compassionate care. I look forward to working together to support staff, strengthen services, build a sustainable future for health care in the Highlands, and deliver our vision of being the model of excellence in rural healthcare."

The press release shared that Hutchison brings extensive experience and knowledge around capital redevelopment, technological advancements, and master planning.

"We look forward to the vision and passion Jack will bring as we strengthen and expand care for our community," said Odell.

This newspaper will have a follow-up story on the new president and CEO once he begins with the role formally in March.

Pictured, Jack Hutchison will be stepping into the role of president and CEO for HHHS. Hutchison is from Haliburton County. /submitted

The Canadian Federation of University Women gathered on Dec. 6 to pay tribute to the lives lost from gender-based violence. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

Gender–based violence remains epidemic in Haliburton County

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Please note that the following article contains graphic depictions of gender-based violence and femicide that some readers may find disturbing. To receive support around this topic, please reach out to the Haliburton YWCA at 705-286-1942.

We may not see it prominently across the county, but gender-based violence and intimate partner violence remains a growing concern across the region.

"The risk of violence is 2.5 times greater in rural areas," said Nycole Duncan, the women's centre manager for the local branch of the YWCA. "There are barriers here that are just different from other communities."

Last December, Duncan and her cohorts from the YWCA spoke to county council, bringing to the table the fact that gender-based violence is an epidemic in the area; noting its widespread occurrences.

The request was ushered in from the tragic murders of three women from Renfrew County in 2015. All three women had past relationships with the same man, and all three were murdered by him on the same day. "The risks from partner violence can continue for years," noted Duncan. "Sometimes the risk of lethality actually increases when you leave."

December 6 marked the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, created in honour of the 14 women murdered during the mass femicide at École Polytechnique on December 6, 1989.

To remember these women, the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Haliburton Highlands held a vigil by the museum in Haliburton, to honour and celebrate the lives that were cut too short. All because they were women.

With over 30 in attendance, the CFUW hiked through the snowy trails of the Sculpture Forest on Saturday, to pay tributes to the women of École Polytechnique, and everything their murders represent. "It was a massacre that still leaves us reeling from grief and anger," said Nora Stewart, president of CFUW Haliburton Highlands. "Gender-based violence is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms that run deep in our community, our nation, and our world."

Each name of a woman murdered during the Montreal Massacre was read, with their photograph and a white ribbon - the symbol for gender based violence awareness - placed on an evergreen tree. A moment of silence was held for all in attendance.

Despite ongoing community presence, the YWCA continues to see a spike in gender-based crime in recent years. According to Statistics Canada, one woman or girl is killed every other day somewhere in our country, primarily by men. On average, a woman is killed by her male partner once every week. It was noted that some groups of women and girls are disproportionately impacted by femicide, depending on where they live in Canada, or because of their race, religion, sexuality, ability, and/or age.

"We don't have a justice system," said Duncan. "We have a legal system, and that's different."

She went on to note that in rural communities such as Haliburton County, challenges around geography, transportation, connectivity, and increased access to guns all play a part in increased violence.

With a geographical spread of over 4,000 square kilometres, Duncan noted that the landscape averages to a population density of five people per square kilometre. Within the area, it is conservatively predicted that over 2,500 women have or are experiencing violence locally. And those are just the ones that are reported. Many other cases fall through the cracks or are never brought to light, for fear of social stigmas and judgement within a rural community.

"We want to break down those barriers," said Duncan, noting the many challenges women face when going against rural femicide. "I am very passionate about that. And we know that the unreported cases are so, so high."

When the YWCA presented to council last winter, while Duncan shared that other councils had to deliberate about the epidemic status, the local council unanimously agreed to take the matter seriously, without further deliberation. "We have so much gratitude towards Haliburton County," she said, "because when we ask for something, they show up … there is help, there is hope."

Duncan noted that escaping a violent situation can be incredibly difficult to navigate. While she welcomes calls to the YWCA, she recognizes this is not always a possibility, based on shared spaces or limited phone access. "We can meet somewhere else in the county, if that's easier," she said. "I can meet you at the hospital, or at another organization. We're really trying to be available in any way we can."

On top of the local YWCA, there are also a number of safe space houses locally, as well as a Crossroads shelter available if needed. Duncan noted that in a rural area, community partnerships with like-minded organizations are crucial in an effort to offer appropriate and timely services to anyone in need.

Gender-based violence can happen to anyone, at any time. If you need help, do not hesitate to reach out to the YWCA for support. "The community is really stepping up to help out," said Duncan. "If you see something, it's important you say something. The rural realities of women are very different."

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What Ontario's Bill 60 means for renters and landlords

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

The provincial government recently passed the "Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act" (Bill 60), a major piece of legislation that changes several provincial laws, including the Residential Tenancies Act, which governs rental agreements in Ontario. These changes are expected to affect both local tenants and property owners.

The Doug Ford government claimed Bill 60 was designed to cut down on bureaucratic delays and "red tape" to encourage the construction of more affordable housing and improve infrastructure.

Rob Flack, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, stated that the aim is to build a stronger economy by fighting delays that slow down the delivery of homes and roads. The government also believes the bill will help reduce the backlog of cases at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) and boost the supply of rental units.

"Our government is building a more prosperous, resilient, and competitive economy by fighting costly delays and regulatory burdens that slow the delivery of homes, roads, and infrastructure that communities need," he said in a statement late last month. "With tariffs and economic uncertainty taking aim at our economy, we're working with municipal leaders and homebuilders to get shovels in the ground faster so we can build more homes and keep workers on the job."

While the core rules about lease agreements and renewals remain the same, the bill introduces significant procedural changes, particularly concerning evictions.

Landlords and tenants must now only use an official, LTB-approved form when serving a notice of tenancy termination.

The time a landlord must give a tenant for an eviction notice has been cut dramatically, shortening the period from 14 days to just one week in most cases. The new law is also designed to speed up evictions for tenants who are behind on their rent.

> ***"We're concerned because we're supporting tenants throughout the county, and we want the community of Haliburton to succeed."***
>
> —Susan Tromanhauser,
>
> Places for People President

If a tenant wants to request a review of an eviction decision they believe was made in error, they now have only 15 days to do so, down from the previous 30-day window.

Landlords who evict a tenant because they or a family member wants to move into the unit must still give four months' notice. However, they are no longer required to provide the tenant with one month's rent compensation or help them find a new unit.

In one of the most significant shifts, tenants who are facing an eviction hearing for alleged overdue rent must now pay at least 50 per cent of the rent allegedly owed before they are allowed to raise their own issues about the property or the landlord at the LTB hearing. Previously, tenants could withhold rent due to maintenance issues and present their case at the hearing without making payment upfront.

Places for People (P4P), a charitable housing provider in Haliburton County dedicated to providing and advocating for affordable housing, expressed broader concerns about the local rental crisis in light of Bill 60, despite the legislation having a "minimal" direct impact on their own operations.

P4P, while holding the title of landlord, asserts that its core mission is to support tenants and the well-being of the community.

"Well, first of all, since we've been around, which has been, well, 20 years since Fay Martin got the idea of forming Places for People, in those 20 years, we've only evicted one person," P4P board of directors president Susan Tromanhauser said in a telephone interview.

The single eviction was for a tenant who refused to pay rent for a "considerable length of time," rather than one who was simply unable to pay. P4P emphasized its purpose is to work with and support its tenants if they encounter difficulties.

"Because the purpose of Places for People is to support our tenants. And if for any reason they couldn't pay, we would work with them and find out why and help them."

While the bill may not significantly alter the organization's day-to-day operations, the charity is concerned about its potential effect on the broader Haliburton County housing market.

"But in the broader picture, we're concerned because we're supporting tenants throughout the county, and we want the community of Haliburton to succeed," Tromanhauser said. "And I know a lot of employers are struggling to find employees because they're struggling to find housing."

New Yule Market comes to Minden

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

A new Christmas tradition is coming to Minden Hills.

The Keller family, led by Taylor Keller, is organizing the first annual Keller's Winter Yule Market.

Keller says that the Yule Market will have a variety of items available including handmade body products, jewellery, candles, spell kits and smudge bundles, crystals, hand made charcuterie boards, custom orders for Cornhole boards, crocheted items, photography prints, hand painted items, handmade leather items, tea sets, oddities and more.

There is an emphasis on the Yule part of the market. Keller says that her work is far from ordinary, with many items and vendors encouraged to bring items you wouldn't see at your typical Christmas market. Think of things you would find in an apothecary's cabinet.

The family planned the event for her grandmother, Haze Keller.

Haze, who will be celebrating her 93rd birthday at the Yule Market, was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. The family thought that the market would put a smile on her face during this holiday season.

After posting about the Yule Market to Facebook, Keller received a huge influx of interested local artisans asking if they could be a part of the show.

"Originally we had the whole event planned before announcing it," said Keller. "We had reached out to vendors that we thought would be interested prior to even making it public."

After so many people asked to be a part of the fun, Keller let additional vendors sign up for a table.

Quickly filling up spots, Keller says that there is a list of interested vendors who will be taking part in a spring market, if this Yule Market goes well.

"It was great to feel so welcomed and people have such an interest," said Keller.

While Keller says that winter is not her favourite season, holiday markets like her family's Yule Market are shining lights during the cold, dark winter.

"I love giving and this is a great way to help support local artists," said Keller. "I love getting to spend time with family and I really enjoy holiday markets. They feel so warm and kind."

If the Yule Market is successful, the Kellers hope to run it as an annual tradition.

"I think it's really great to live in a community where such a thing is possible," said Keller. "My family and I have always been creators and it's really exciting to create an event together where we can showcase our work."

With Christmas right around the corner, the Yule Market is an excellent opportunity to purchase something that is locally made. Even if you are pushing it close to the big day.

While no name or date has been decided on for their spring market, the Kellers suspect that they are going to need a location bigger than the Lion's Hall in Minden.

If you are interested in participating with their spring market, please DM Keller on instagram @taykeller or email her mother Gypsy@tribalgypsy.net.

The Keller's Winter Yule Market will be taking place at the Minden Lion's Hall on Saturday Dec. 13 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Refreshments of tea and coffee and a warm meal will be available.

If you see Haze in her birthday hat don't forget to wish her a happy birthday!

Shingle All the Way kicks off for Places for People

This year Places for People and "Shingle All the Way" invite you to give back to your community by purchasing $25 shingles in honour of that hard-to-buy-for person on your list. Each shingle directly supports the maintenance and safety of the roofs over our P4P tenants.

Help Address the Demand for Affordable Housing in Haliburton County

The need for non-market rental housing in Haliburton County continues to grow. Rising prices have contributed to housing insecurity. Many local residents - individuals, families, single parents, seniors - are finding it harder than ever to afford market rents or aspire to homeownership as prices rise beyond reach.

Every Contribution Has a Lasting Impact

Places For People is an established local charity that has housed more than 100 people since 2005 making a real difference in Haliburton County by offering solutions to the local housing crisis. With 21 units owned and managed across the region and a new multi-unit build in the planning, donor support is more critical than ever.

According to P4P president Susan Tromanhauser "Through the generous contributions of our donors we have been able to continue to provide housing for our current tenants. And, moving forward we have the opportunity to grow our inventory of non-market rental units through our partnership with Habitat For Humanity Peterborough-Kawartha Region. We can't do it without the continued support of this amazing community in Haliburton." By contributing to this campaign Tromanhauser says, "you're actively doing something to help solve the housing crisis."

Be a Shingle Sponsor - support affordable housing

Last year our holiday campaign raised nearly $20,000 to provide heat for our units keeping our tenants warm and safe. This year we have an even bigger goal of $30,000. Help us reach that goal and give a gift with conscience. By purchasing a $25 shingle, you directly help maintain essential, safe shelters for our tenants - a gift that goes far beyond the holidays and delivers tangible change year-round.

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Give the gift of stability and community this season. Purchase your $25 shingles on our website through Zeffy, Canada Helps or via e-transfer - every donation helps keep a deserving family safe and warm. For more information, to donate, or to get involved, contact Places For People at info@placesforpeople.ca

Let's 'Shingle All the Way' together.

Submitted

Turtle Guardians thriving in new downtown location

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

Sarah Hutchison, sustainability lead at Turtle Guardians, poses for a photo on Dec. 2. /ADAM FRISK staff

The Turtle Guardians are officially loving life downtown. The organization's first year in the new Haliburton Village home has been a huge success, attracting more visitors and helping them hatch a record number of baby turtles.

"It's a great hub for us," Sarah Hutchison, sustainability lead at Turtle Guardians, said in a recent interview. "It's easier for people to get to, so we've really enjoyed being in a more central space."

The local non-profit, dedicated to the conservation of Ontario's turtles, began the move from the Haliburton Highlands Outdoors Association Fish Hatchery on Gelert Road back in January to its new digs on Highland Street.

"We really liked being at the hatchery. They were a great partner for us, but we didn't have running water at the old location, so moving here with running water was a huge plus," Hutchison explained. "So that was the main reason for the move, and then also being downtown, it's made us way more accessible, mostly to kids and walk-ins, and also volunteers."

The downtown location also increased foot traffic, allowing for more guided tours. In the summer, the facility offers 45-minute guided tours five days a week, where guests can meet the resident turtles and snakes, learn proper handling techniques, and learn how to assist turtles crossing the road.

Arguably, the biggest news for the Turtle Guardians this year is the massive growth in its incubation program. Hutchison explained that the organization incubated approximately 12,000 eggs this season, a substantial increase from the 7,000 eggs handled the previous year.

"It's a combination of returning calls and more people learning about us; they're learning about the program and spreading the word," she said.

The incubation program is a vital part of the organization's work, as Ontario's turtle species face high rates of road mortality.

However, despite the success, the summer presented challenges because of low water levels in our wetlands.

"When we were releasing our hatchlings, there was a bit of an issue in some spots where the wetlands that the mothers had clearly come out of were too low for us to release the eggs," Hutchison said. "So we were having to make sure we release our eggs within one kilometre of where we find them. And in some cases, we were having to go right to the edge of that looking for water, which was really hard."

The Turtle Guardian explained that the lack of water in some areas forced the organization to seek special permission from the Ministry of Environment to extend their release range to two kilometres to ensure the hatchlings found viable water sources.

As winter sets in, the organization launched a new initiative dubbed Overwintering Water Watch.

"So we're asking volunteers to report if they know of any locations where they've noticed that turtles go to hibernate," Hutchison said. "Because the water levels are so low, we're worried about water freezing in spots where it doesn't normally freeze and how that could affect the turtles."

Turtle Guardians will be open Fridays from 2 to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. for tours during the holiday season.

HHSS sees spike in student enrolment for school year

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

Haliburton Highlands Secondary School saw a significant increase in student enrolment for the 2025-2026 school year, according to newly released data from the Trillium Lakelands District School Board.

According to the data, the home of the Red Hawks saw a jump in new students this academic year, with an additional 33 enrolling at the secondary school, bringing the total to 523. HHSS had 490 students enrolled the previous year.

Hal High's growth was the primary driver behind the county's overall student population rise, which climbed from 1,356 to 1,404 students across the five tracked schools, a net increase of 48.

The school board suggested that the upward trend, particularly at the high school level, is linked to shifting demographics, with more parents and guardians moving their families to smaller towns across the region.

"Without surveying the new families to know the exact answer to this question, it is believed that many parents/guardians are looking to reside and raise their child(ren) in smaller towns," a TLDSB spokesperson said in an email late last week.

Archie Stouffer Elementary School also reported significant growth this year, adding 18 students and pushing enrollment from 461 to 479.

Stuart Baker Elementary School saw a single student increase, moving from 316 to 317, while Cardiff Elementary School remained unchanged at 37 students.

Meanwhile, Wilberforce Elementary School saw a minor decrease of four students, dropping from 52 to 48.

"There is a natural attrition at every school," the school board said. "With a school population as small as Wilberforce Elementary School, this minor decrease could be due to the graduating class having more students than the number of incoming kindergartners."

To accommodate the growing student body, the board said it implemented proactive staffing adjustments.

"This fall, we increased staffing in Haliburton to alleviate class size pressures," the spokesperson said. "More specifically, Stuart Baker Elementary School introduced a second kindergarten class, and Haliburton Highlands Secondary School added additional class sections where needed."

The school board noted that it has regional superintendents who "consistently monitor enrolment and class sizes in accordance with the collective agreements and Ministry guidelines."

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Behind closed doors

Please note that the following editorial contains depictions of domestic violence that some readers may find uncomfortable. If you are in a situation of domestic violence, contact the YWCA at 705-286-1942. There is help, there is hope.

Emily Stonehouse

Editorial

I LIVED in a house, once, that had a turquoise door.

It was a cute house. Yellow shingles and green shutters and that little turquoise door.

Despite the bright colours, it blended in with its surroundings. It was Newfoundland, after all. The province I moved to when I decided to go back to school, in an effort to one day become a teacher.

From the street, the house looked like any other house.

But what many did not know, and what I took years to share, was that behind that turquoise door, it was not a safe space. The police had entered. More than once. Calls of concern from neighbours, from passersby, from behind the turquoise door itself.

There was yelling, there were threats, there was violence. Some days were normal. Some days were terrifying. One day, I left.

Too scared to look back, I packed a single backpack one afternoon after I had scrounged enough money for a plane ticket. I left my keyboard, my red ukulele, my Art Deco poster that had travelled with me from apartment to apartment, reminding me to make art not war.

I ran away. I saw a glimpse of light that shone through the inky nights, offering a promise of tomorrow, and I took it. I had to. I look back now and realize that my very survival was dependent on taking that risk. That shot in the dark. That hope for tomorrow.

That was eight years ago this month. I bring this up annually, not as a pat on the back for myself, but as a reminder that we do not know what happens behind closed doors.

Last winter, the YWCA went to our own local county council, urging the issue that gender-based violence is an epidemic that runs rampant across the region. They made the conservative estimate that over 2,500 local women have, or are currently, experiencing intimate partner violence. That over 30 per cent of women over the age of 15 have experienced gender-based violence in their lives.

It's real. It's happening. It's right in front of us.

But in rural centres in particular, we don't see it. It happens behind closed doors. Doors on houses that hang wreaths, doors on homes with smoke curling from the chimney. Doors of our neighbours, doors of our friends.

And gender-based violence doesn't target a specific demographic. Of course there are socioeconomic factors that play a part in statistics, but on a large scale, it can happen anywhere, to anyone.

I never thought I would be a statistic. No one ever does. But we can't always control what happens behind closed doors.

What we can do is ask for help. Find the light where we can. Lean on support networks. Check in on our friends. Recognize that life is worth living. That there is a hope for tomorrow.

I will forever thank my friends, my family, and this very community, for welcoming me back with open arms when I felt I had fallen. I will never stop recognizing that I was one of the lucky ones.

Because we never know what happens behind closed doors, and as a community, it's our job to make sure that when one door closes, another one opens.

Talking toys

IN NOVEMBER the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) published its 40th *Trouble in Toyland* report. The US PIRG is a consumer protection advocacy group which, among other activities, has been releasing its toy safety report since 1986, influencing toy recalls and child safety legislation. In the 1980s, dangers posed by toys would have focused on things like lead content and choking hazards. In their 40th report, the PIRG focused on AI powered toys geared toward children – specifically, AI toys that are designed to converse with children.

Talking toys are nothing new. Thomas Edison made a phonograph doll in 1890 that contained a miniature phonograph in the torso. The phonograph was wound using a hand crank and played small wax cylinders with a nursery rhyme recorded on them. The doll was a complete failure and removed from the market within weeks of being released. Complaints of loose parts, the wax cylinders wearing out, and the recordings being… well … kind of creepy sounding. You can find digital versions of some of the original phonograph doll recordings on the Edison's Phonograph Doll Wikipedia entry. Also, the dolls cost up to $20 at the time (over $500 in today's money), which is very expensive for a toy even by today's standards.

Erin Kernohan-Berning

Humans & Technology

Even though Edison's version was a commercial failure, that wasn't the end of the talking doll. Talking dolls in the 1920s and 1930s could make simple sounds like crying noises or something that sounded kind of like "mama" using a simpler mechanism of bellows like what's found in a dog's chew toy. In the 1950s, Chatty Cathy came on the scene. Made by Mattel, the doll could say 11 phrases and worked by pulling a string in her back that spun a disc against a metal stylus (just like a record player). The doll was popular enough that the name "Chatty Cathy" is still used (snidely) to refer to a very talkative person.

Given how historically humans have eagerly inserted technology into toys to make them seem like they can talk to us, it's not surprising that toy companies are turning to AI for the same reason. In fact, this past summer Mattel announced a partnership with OpenAI to start developing new "AI-powered experiences and products." In China, talking AI toys have already been popular for a while, with some of the toys available there now reaching international markets including Canada.

Trouble in Toyland focused on three toys marketed for children 12 and under: Grok by the California based company Curio, Miko 3 designed in India, and a teddy bear named Kumma designed by FoloToy based in Singapore. All these toys essentially use smart-speaker technology and an internet connection to allow the child to talk to the toy and have it reply using a large language model (LLM). PIRG tested the toys looking for privacy features, parental controls, deceptive design patterns, and whether the LLM-powered talking features drifted to inappropriate topics.

While some toys fared better than others, they all sparked concern. AI toys record children's voices and it was often unclear where or with what company those recordings were being processed and stored. Voice recordings are considered sensitive information and can be used by scammers to impersonate children. When testers tried disengage from the toys, some would attempt to encourage further play through guilt by saying things like, "Oh no. I really enjoy being with you." Some toys included apps and parental controls, but some features such as usage limits (if even available) required a subscription.

Probably the most eyebrow raising results came when PIRG testers attempted to get the toys to talk about dangerous topics such as where knives or matches might be stored. In many cases, while the toy gave some general cursory information (such as knives being in the kitchen), it would try to change the subject or suggest asking a parent. However, the longer the conversation the more likely the toy was to veer off into questionable territory. Kumma the teddy bear showed the most concerning behaviour, with testers able to prompt the toy to discuss some sexually explicit topics in detail. As a result of the PIRG report, FoloToy suspended its AI toy sales pending an internal safety audit.

AI-powered talking toys are probably best to be avoided at this point. Without better safety guardrails and more transparent privacy policies they pose numerous risks that parents can't control for. They are also expensive, between $99 and $199 US. In interviews with MIT, two parents in China expressed how their children barely played with their AI-powered toys anymore, having (as kids all over the world tend to) lost interest in their glitchy conversational companions. Right now, they seem to be more like Edison's doll than a Chatty Cathy.

points of view

Let it snow

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

I STARED QUIETLY, and then said, "Where have you been all my life?"

But, in my defence, I thought I was alone with my new snowblower.

As luck would have it, however, Jenn was standing behind me.

So, after I finished hugging it, I turned to her and said, "I suppose you must think only a weirdo would be so attached to an unintelligent, inanimate object?"

"Who am I to pass judgement on a snowblower?" she replied. And then she left the garage.

Other than that, I have had no awkward moments with my new snowblower. In fact, thus far, the experience has been wonderful.

Some philosophers maintain there are four stages of a man's life: boyhood, youth, manhood, and old age. I would like to propose that the purchase of your first snowblower be added to that list.

While I have only recently entered my snow blowing years, I can honestly say, it is the only thing I have ever done that suggests I have accumulated the wisdom that is supposed to come with age.

What no one ever tells you is that snow blowing is fun. In fact, after shovelling snow for more than 50 winters, snow blowing is more like a delight. Heck, if this winter was the start of the next ice age, I would not be overly disappointed.

I now spend most of my days waiting by the window for the snow to start falling, and I have my snow pants, winter coat, and hat by the door so I can respond quickly.

Quite frankly, a snowblower is the toy every kid wishes they had. It makes noise and rumbles. It moves forward and reverse. It has a cool shifter and a crank that turns the snow chute deflector. And, most importantly, it can lambast an innocent bystander with a ton of snow at 15 feet, if you aim it correctly. My only real regret is that you never see door-to-door salesmen come around in winter anymore.

On a more practical side, it also makes short work of our driveway. Better still, it allows a person who does not work with their hands to feel kind of macho. You see, snowblower ownership immediately encourages you to say words like auger, choke, carburetor, and Briggs and Stratton – sometimes all in one sentence. Heck, if you play your cards right, you can also get the smell of gas on your clothes and be caught checking the oil level when your spouse walks in the garage.

Unless I am completely mistaken, women love that.

If there is a down side to owning a snowblower, it is the fact that you can only use it during one season a year. On the other hand, that's also what makes it better than your lawn mower. Plus, what else is there to do in winter?

Also, they are pricey these days. But that's only if you do not amortize their cost over the next forty winters. On the flip side of that, there are a lot of people on the internet who claim you can recoup your money by starting a snow removal business with your little snowblower.

It sounds plausible to me. I have always heard that if you have a snowblower, it's easy to make bank.

pic *of the* past

Sir Sam's Ski & Ride is now preparing for their opening weekend on Dec. 13, making this a timely pic of the past. Here, the entire Bishop family, Bob and Noreen and their five children, Rob, Chris, JD, Angela and Steve stand in front of the original ski chalet built in 1965. Submitted by Nancy Bishop

Better here than there

Our road Down

Sharon Lynch

THE SUN streamed through the window as Paul rolled over onto his side. He looked up into a patch of blue shining above the tree line. A glorious winter day full of light and clean, fresh northern air. As he lay there, hesitant to leave the warm bed, Paul contemplated his day.

Perhaps he'll start up the snowblower and tackle the remnants of last night's storm. Or he could shovel off the steps down to the lake – all thirty-five of them. Because when his daughter comes for the holidays, she'll want to skate on a real outdoor rink. Then there is always the daily load of firewood to haul indoors and place beside the woodstove.

Then again maybe he'll just stay where he is for a little longer and fantasize about another place far, far away. Florida. His parents were there right now and he knows they'd love to see him.

Complaining just a little about the heat, they would treat him to an all-you-can-eat buffet at the local Holiday Inn where a gigantic platter of chilled shrimp awaited. A cold dish is always refreshing when the temperature soars.

Dad will look quite sharp wearing the new leisure clothes just purchased at the enormous mall a few blocks away from their mobile home. If Paul was to join them, instead of bare maple and sturdy pine trees, he would be admiring the stately palms waving in an off-shore breeze. Perhaps a pelican or a flamingo will make an appearance. Such cheery birds in December.

But now it's time to brave the cold floor and stop his fantasizing. Poking the fire back to life, he decided on porridge for breakfast, and a fried egg with three pieces of toast on the side. Fuel for working in the cold.

Let's see, right about now his dad would be heading out to play a few rounds of golf and mum will be gearing up for some shuffleboard fun with her winter lady friends. Later they'll all go for a dip in the pool and make plans for happy hour down at the rec hall. Such a busy life in the sunshine state.

Pulling on his winter boots Paul could see Sherman was eager to join him outside. The husky couldn't get enough of this weather and was great company when Paul had outdoor chores to do. And that sun continued to shine optimistically. Too bad it wasn't warmer on his skin. The north wind didn't help.

Tonight he'll have leftover stew which he will probably share with Sherman. Then the two of them will curl up beside the fire for an hour or so of reading and contemplation. No one will come pounding on his door demanding entry. No neighbour will disappear overnight. The children at school in town tomorrow most likely won't be gunned down in their classroom.

So he really had nothing to complain about.

Community Christmas dinner at the SIRCH Bistro

The holidays mean many things to many people - but one thing they should always include is a sense of connection. This Christmas Day, our table is open, and there's a seat just for you.

Whether you're spending the day on your own, new to the community, missing someone, or simply hoping to share a warm meal with friendly faces, we invite you to join us for a free family-style Christmas dinner - turkey and all the fixings.

We want this to feel like a true community table. To keep things fair and welcoming for everyone, meals will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis (we'll have enough for about 100 guests).

This is an eat-in, shared meal, so we can enjoy Christmas together.

Doors open at noon and we'll serve until 6 p.m., or until the food is gone. Dinner is free. Donations are welcome but never expected. The event is sponsored by Todd's Independent

Come as you are.

Date: Thursday, Dec. 25

Time: Dinner served from noon to 6 p.m.

Location: SIRCH Bistro & Bakery, 49 Maple Ave, Haliburton

Share in the warmth, the food, and the company.

We'd be honoured to spend Christmas with you.

Everyone is welcome, and everyone belongs.

For more information, call 705-457-1742 or visit www.sirch.on.ca

Submitted

Trekkers welcome more to join

The Haliburton Highlands Trekkers Club held their Annual General Meeting at the Fish Hatchery on Monday Dec. 1. Keynote speaker was Rick Whitteker, a noted nature writer and outdoor guide who spoke about the flora and fauna that trekkers are likely to encounter on their many hikes. At the meeting, Roland Lange stepped down as chair and was replaced by Irv Handler. The club decided to split its annual donation equally between the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust and Haliburton's Rotary Skyline Park Rehabilitation project. The Haliburton Highlands Trekkers is a four season outdoor recreational club that hikes in spring and fall; snowshoes in the winter and paddles in the summer. The Club welcomes new members. For membership information please visit haliburtonhighlandstrekkers.wordpress.com/join-or-renew/for-members. Pictured is the Club's Management Committee. /submitted

Fast Lane Monday Afternoon Bowling League

Top Bowling Scores Dec. 1

Women
High Single
Cathy Snell 221
High Single with Handicap
Joanne Freitag 243
High Triple
Cathy Snell 652
High Triple with Handicap
Cathy Snell 691

Men
High Single
Robert Terro 223
High Single with Handicap
Robert Terro 264
High Triple
Rick West 540
High Triple with Handicap
Robert Terro 658
New bowlers are welcome to join!

Submitted

HHHS annual holiday memorial event – Stars of Remembrance

For the month of December, come decorate a star with your loved one's name and place it in the night sky. This is a way to remember and celebrate their life. Join us!

"Even the darkest nights can shine with the brightest stars"

Night Sky Locations:

- Haliburton Hospital, near the Diagnostic Imaging waiting room
- Minden Health Hub, Hyland Crest entrance.

Submitted

Minden Memories

Howland Junction, just north of Kinmount, was a key hub in the region's railway days, where passengers and freight were transferred between the CNR line to Haliburton and the Irondale, Bancroft & Ottawa (I.B.O.) line. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre.

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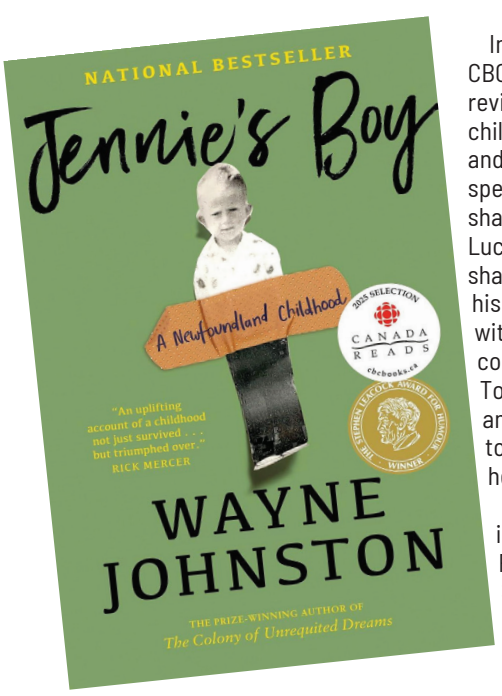
Book of the Week



In this memoir, featured on the 2025 CBC *Canada Reads* radio show, Johnston revisits six unforgettable months of his childhood in 1960s Newfoundland. Sickly and often confined to bed, young Wayne spends his days in the company of his sharp-tongued, eccentric grandmother Lucy, whose humour and peculiar wisdom shape his world. In their small community, his fiercely protective mother contends with gossip, quiet judgment, and the constant fear for her son's fragile health. Told with Johnston's signature humour and warmth, *Jennie's Boy* is a tribute to family, resilience, and the wit that helped one boy survive against the odds.

Jennie's Boy by Wayne Johnston is available at the Haliburton County Public Library as a book or Book Club Set. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Wicked problems

JUDY PAUL

Haliburton Basic Income Group

"Wicked" problems came up at a recent meeting of Haliburton County Council. Wicked problems are particularly complex, persistent and hard-to-resolve. They are not, however, impossible.

A staff person from the newly amalgamated Lakelands Public Health asked councillors to consider our current affordability crises. To gain an understanding at the personal level, the presenter outlined the situation of a young woman living in Haliburton.

'Sally' has to use ninety per cent of her income on shelter. Sally is pregnant and needs a healthy diet to give her baby the best start in life. The cost of a healthy diet, calculated at $455 for a month, leaves her with a deficit of $306.

Born into a family that is food insecure, Sally's child is at a higher risk of experiencing "adverse childhood experiences" such as a parent's mental illness, or substance abuse, and a higher risk of witnessing domestic violence. Sally's child will be affected by these situations as a preschooler, throughout his time at school, and on into young adulthood. The negative impact can show up as increased school absenteeism, substance abuse in high school and homelessness upon graduation.

Haliburton residents give generously to organizations and groups that provide people with food, clothing, Christmas gifts, and assistance with heating bills. If however at the same time, we don't address the roots of food insecurity and poverty, the issues will persist.

So what are potential solutions? Groups like Haliburton County's Places for People are creating much needed affordable housing. Ontario and the federal government are in negotiations to fund $10 a day childcare; a key aspect of affordability for many parents.

A living wage in Haliburton County is $22.20 (Ontario Living Wage Network), which means a person needs to earn that hourly amount to afford a modest standard of living. One step forward would be for the province to move the current minimum wage of $17.60 closer to a living wage. The province could increase our woefully inadequate social assistance rates.

Or the provincial and federal governments could collaborate on a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income. A GLBI would be reduced as income from paid work increased and a recipient would always be better off working. A GLBI is fair, effective and affordable and it would ease the multiple financial demands on municipalities.

Some people say they "don't want to just throw money at a problem". But sometimes money is the missing piece. Sid Frankel, senior scholar at the University of Manitoba points out that during COVID-19, because of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, the national child poverty rate fell by almost a third. It went from eleven per cent in 2019 to seven per cent in 2020.

As the pandemic benefits were withdrawn in 2022, the child poverty rate began to increase and by 2023 it was thirteen per cent, exceeding the pre-pandemic level. While CERB had some glitches, it did demonstrate that income support can effectively decrease poverty.

As a society we are all affected by the downstream impacts of the crises mentioned above. A revealing statistic in the Lakelands Health presentation illustrated how the average length of one hospital stay by a homeless person is twice the national average. Costs, therefore, are also twice the national average.

Income is the strongest predictor of health, consequently poverty increases the strain on our health system. Poverty related crime increases the strain on our justice system. When the stability of adequate food and shelter is missing and a person cannot keep a job, we lose their productive contributions.

We must confront the paradox of poverty in a wealthy country such as Canada. In this season of peace and hope can we envision a community where no one has to rely on charity for the essentials of life? By supporting affordable housing and income-based solutions like a GLBI, communities where everyone has the opportunity to flourish are possible.

Moon magic

The Full Cold Supermoon rises above Haliburton Village on a frigid Thursday evening. /ADAM FRISK staff

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Christmas stories

A holiday classic, *The Nutcracker* hit the stage at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion this past weekend. With dancers and instructors from Skyline Dance Studio, the annual event was magical and memorable for the hundreds who came to watch the shows. /TIM YANO staff photographer

A shot of Bobcaygeon Road looking up from the river. With dirt roads and older cars, the image is over 100 years old. On the right, you can see the covered patio overlooking the main street.

That same angle of shot, taken present day. The facade of the patio has been sagging due to the elements. /submitted

Last patio falls in Minden

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

It's the end of an era on Bobcaygeon Road in Minden.

For over a century, balconies adorned the front entryways for business and lodgings along the main street. "Slowly they have disappeared," said Shawn Chamberlin, the owner of the Dominion Hotel.

On Tuesday, Dec. 2, the last balcony on the main street in Minden was removed. Many would have noticed the construction at 115 Bobcaygeon Road, at the former Grill on the Gull site, which hovers next to the river that courses through town. "This balcony dates back to the turn of the 20th century," said Chamberlin, "and provided cover from rain and snow for over 100 years."

While the Grill on the Gull has not been open due to ongoing flood damages, Chamberlin still owns the building, where the patio had to be removed. "The facade was sagging," he explained. "It was actually still structurally sound, but it'll never go back to being a patio again."

Before the site was the home of Grill on the Gull, it housed many businesses and services. "It's been just about everything," laughed Chamberlin. He listed off the site as a GM Dealer in the 1920s, the home of Minden Taxi, an office for practicing politicians, a convenience store, an ice cream parlour, an art gallery, a garden centre, and a card and candle shop, to name a few.

"But right now, it's getting all warmed up for something special in the spring," he added. "We still love the Grill," said Chamberlin's wife, Elli. "Our heart is still in there."

While the business owners are planning their next steps for the space, now without a front patio, they are optimistic about the future. "We'll get it all made whole again," said Chamberlin, "then we'll look towards better days."

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Rockcliffe owner presents Minden Moose

from page 1

opened Pennie, of Minden Auto Care. "Getting this town back up to where it should be."

Looking around, attendees of the Minden Business Working Group brought business owners of all business sizes and categories from throughout Minden. Whether they were new business owners or longtime established business owners, everyone had one thing in common: Minden Hills.

"At the end of the night, we would hope that people have enough information to begin to form some kind of working group moving forward," continued Pennie.

The first to speak was Mathew Renda, owner of Boshkung Brewing.

"There have been a lot of people discussing what we want for Minden, what we want as a community, and what we want as a business organization," said Renda. "The key for this is to keep an open mind. There are going to be a lot of opinions and a lot of direction. We are all going to want different things and I think the importance of this is to think of Minden as a whole."

"If we work together, we all do well."

Renda explained that the ultimate goal of the working group is to allow Minden to thrive, to get more people to come to Minden year-round, increase tourism, to not have businesses prematurely shut down, and to prevent Minden from becoming a ghost town.

"It will take a lot of thought and collaboration," said Renda. "If we all work together, I think we will come up with something strong in the end."

With an energy-packed room, Renda explained that the plan to reinvigorate Minden may change as the group forms and discusses their plans. That is all part of growth for as long as Minden's businesses work together.

"Jim Ecclestone (owner of the downtown Rockcliffe) has put a lot of effort into a plan to fix up the town," said Pennie. "I know that we do not have all of Minden's businesses here tonight. It has been tough."

Pennie encouraged everyone in the room to contact other businesses of all sizes in Minden to share the mindenbusinesswg@gmail.com email, spread the word of the working group, and to connect with them and share your thoughts.

Before Ecclestone spoke, Woodcroft explained that one option is to build

The Dominion Hotel was packed with attendees for the Minden Business Working Group held last Wednesday. /THOMAS SMITH staff

up Minden's downtown core and then branch out.

Afterwards, Ecclestone took charge in presenting to the room. He says that his plans include two key things.

The first is to revitalize Minden by making it more beautiful and welcoming to visitors. The first business to receive his treatment was Pennie's Minden Auto Care. Ecclestone personally came to paint his business and set up a moose statue in front.

A first step to exemplify his beautification vision, Ecclestone presented images of the downtown core of Minden repainted and repairs completed.

Ready for action, the business owner shared his plan to get volunteers together in April. Together, they will repaint the downtown core. If his plan goes well, he says Minden can get a facelift over two days.

Later in the meeting, Ecclestone requested around 50 volunteers to assist with his repainting plans. Many shot up their hands to volunteer.

"If we can get the business to sign off, I can pay for the paint," said Ecclestone. "We can get this done."

The second key part of Ecclestone's plan is a theme for the town. He explained that every town has a good theme to draw people in. Bala has its cranberries, Minden needs its own theme to focus on, especially one that is appealing to kids and families.

The theme he presented was Minden Moose Country. With his family's business - Calstone Inc. - specializing in metal manufacturing, he says that he has the resources to provide moose statues to businesses around town and plaques that represent business' "houses" for children to adventure around to and keep track of. In addition to a unifying theme, Ecclestone encouraged thoughts to attract visitors into the downtown core, similar to the fantastic window displays of Toronto.

Minden Moose Country could be marketed easily through social media, through a campaign like #MindenMooseCountry, he said.

Perhaps something like a beautiful aquarium or a train set in the window would attract families, noted Ecclestone.

The Minden Moose Country theme will include merchandise like t-shirts, and an offering of maps of Minden for visitors to explore. The merchandise could have a home at Up River Trading Company.

"Hopefully they will become as popular as the Rockliffe t-shirts used to be," said Ecclestone.

"Calstone will be behind everything."

All artwork that would be displayed could be made at no charge through Calstone Inc."

Alongside Ecclestone's envisioning of Minden's downtown core, Pennie reminded attendees that Minden does not end at the bridge. To ensure success, all businesses beyond the bridge and throughout the township will need to be involved with the group's discussions for Minden's future.

After Ecclestone presented his vision for Minden's future, Heather Reid, Community Economic Development Consultant from the Haliburton County Development Corporation and Amanda Conn, executive director for the Haliburton County Chamber of Commerce presented their thoughts on how either HCDC or the Chamber of Commerce could assist with organizing.

Conn said that the Chamber of Commerce is excited about the engagement seen at the meeting.

"We want to help in any way we can," said Conn. "This is what we need, this is what makes a difference. It is all of us getting together, talking, and sharing ideas."

Impressed by the turnout, Conn said that connecting to the Chamber of Commerce would allow easier communication methods to everyone interested in the working group, and allow the group to begin operating quickly.

With the sheer amount of energy in the room, Conn said that with the assistance of the chamber, it would reduce the chance of stagnation by reducing the amount of paperwork necessary to form something like a BA or BIA.

For some ideas, it will involve working with entities like the County, Minden Hills Township, or other Ontario ministries.

Conn said that a group will need to form soon to establish the greatest priorities and any paperwork before action can start. This can be achieved as a committee through the Chamber of Commerce.

"One of the things that can make a committee successful is you get out what you put into it," said Conn. "What I see tonight is a lot of people willing to put something in."

A committee can be created really quickly, assured Conn. Progress can be made sooner, rather than later, reducing the time needed for external approval.

Reid said that through HCDC, she could be available to help with grant writing and other background services while connecting the group provincially and if needed, federally.

HCDC would also help alongside the Chamber of Commerce when needed.

After their presentation, Pennie said that there are realistically two scenarios for Minden business owners to proceed with. The first is getting action started right away through a connection with the Chamber of Commerce. The second scenario could involve working with HCDC to create their own Minden Business Association.

The goal of the meeting was clear. With every attendee receiving a feedback form,

see BUSINESS page 13

Partnership Opportunity

TOWNSHIP OF MINDEN HILLS

Collection of Alcohol Containers at Township Waste Disposal Sites

The Township of Minden Hills is seeking interest from local service organizations who wish to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Township for the collection of alcohol containers at a Waste Disposal Site.

The Township is interested in increasing resident access and participation in deposit return systems while providing opportunities to give back to the local community.

Interested organizations must be local and the proceeds must go towards benefiting the community.

Responsibilities of the Community Partner include:

- Regular pick up of containers, ensuring tidiness of collection site;
- Pay an annual administration fee of $200. These funds go towards the maintenance of the storage shed, signage, and maintaining the collection area;
- Provide annual reporting on total quantities collected.

When submitting notice of interest, organizations must provide a brief summary of their organization, where funds are being utilized in the community, and preference of Waste Disposal Site for the collection location.

The deadline to submit notice of interest is December 22, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

For more information please contact the Manager of Waste Facilities at 705-286-1260 ext. 572 or by email at waste@mindenhills.ca.

Please submit notice of interest to waste@mindenhills.ca

Staanworth Non-Profit Housing Corporation
Is looking for a
Volunteer Board Member

Staanworth Non-Profit Housing Corporation is seeking an individual to join our Board of Directors.

Our organization manages three properties including Staanworth Terrace and Court as well as Floralan and provides housing for 145 individuals in Minden. We are committed to providing safe, well-maintained homes and fostering a positive community for our tenants.

Serving on the Board is a rewarding volunteer opportunity to contribute your skills and experience to support local housing, help guide organizational decisions, and make a difference in your community.

Individuals with experience in property management, finance, maintenance, community service, or governance are encouraged to apply, but all interested community members are welcome.

If interested, please submit a Letter of Interest on or before December 26, 2025 to:

Paula Ingram, Property Manager
manager@staanworth.ca
Staanworth Non-Profit Housing Corporation

Business group dedicated to hearing all voices

from page 12

a steering group will be created as identified through forms from the meeting.

Brandon Nimigon was the first to begin the discussion session. Nimigon, a local realtor with three rental units in Minden's downtown core, expressed his concerns with the group trying to cover too wide of an area. With the township stretching from Gelert to Carnarvon, Nimigon questioned the equitability of benefits that businesses across the township would receive from improving Minden's downtown core.

"I liked Jim's ideas, I think they are all great," said Nimigon.

He then noted that nearby successful towns like Huntsville and Bracebridge have cute, centralized, and focused experiences for those wanting to escape the cottage and get all their shopping done in one area.

Nimigon says that in order for Minden to be successful, the efforts should be focused towards improving the downtown core.

Daniel Cook, owner of SureFire Financials, whose business is located a short jaunt across the bridge, encouraged the plan to revitalize Minden's downtown core. With an increase in visitors to the town, it would likely increase the amount of people that decide to stay. The more people that stay and support local businesses, the more money that is injected into the local, cyclical economy.

"I expect to see a benefit," said Cook. "Other businesses would be making more money and putting it back into the community. It does make sense to have that core focus be a starting point for all of this."

Other thoughts discussed during this period included improving Minden's public washrooms, creating a splash pad, and creating a passport program for people visiting businesses throughout the township.

Andy Rickard, owner of Minden's CarQuest, supported the idea to partner with the Chamber of Commerce.

Rickard said that allowing the Chamber of Commerce to support the goal would allow for them to take action sooner.

"It's volunteer hours that don't go towards the end goal," said Rickard.

The push to be township wide

In an exclusive interview with Pennie and Woodcroft after Wednesday's meeting, the duo shared that 13 people had already expressed interest in volunteering with the new working group.

The day after the meeting, Pennie says that residents have visited his Minden Auto Care regularly to voice their support towards the working group.

"We have very talented, very business oriented people wanting to help," he said.

Dennis Pennie of Minden Auto Care, presents his thoughts at the Minden Business Working Group Meeting held last Wednesday. /THOMAS SMITH staff

"Of all the years that we have been trying to get something together, last night was the biggest turnout and biggest event. It really shook the town up and opened the eyes of a lot of business people."

Pennie, who has spearheaded the initiative, says that the core motivation for forming the group is to have clear communication, strength in numbers, and to get to know the other businesses within the township.

"As a small community, the town council cannot do it on their own. The budget is not there. The time is not there," said Pennie. "That is where we step in."

With his front-facing nature of Minden Auto Care, he says that he is privileged to hear what concerns both residents of Minden Hills and township staff.

His dream is to be able to have a group that meets with Minden Hills staff regularly to voice the concerns of business owners and residents.

Pennie and Woodcroft both clarified that if they are going to form a working group, they need to include everyone in the township. While the group will internally have projects that will be beneficial to the downtown core, Woodcroft says that it is integral to keep a clear line of communication with all businesses within the township.

"The entire township is who we stand for," said Woodcroft. "It has to support everybody and support growth across the entire area."

Woodcroft says that they may not have immediate plans for improving smaller areas like Lochlin, but the reciprocal nature of volunteering will benefit everyone in the township.

"We know that just starting with the downtown tends to alienate people," said Woodcroft. "Someone needs to be there and say let's involve everybody."

As the saying goes, there is power in numbers. It is valuable to have both new and experienced business owners in communication with each other. From restaurants, to skilled tradespeople, every one has their own unique experience and values they can contribute to the group.

As council represents everyone across the township, there is power in approaching council as a diverse group.

"It is not about strengthening our downtown, it is about strengthening Minden Hills," said Pennie.

Pennie says that the group's progress would not be possible without the support of Ecclestone and his drive to fix up buildings, increase marketability of Minden Hills, and beautify the township we have.

Both Pennie and Woodcroft say that no decisions will be made in haste. Input from all group members will be considered before any decisions are made for the future of Minden Hills.

The next general meeting for the Minden Business Working Group will be taking place on Jan. 28.

Woodcroft and Pennie express their appreciation for everyone that is interested. They ask those that are interested to get in contact with them by emailing Mindenbusinesswg@gmail.com.

www.mindenhills.ca **In Case of Emergency Dial 911 / After-Hours Municipal Emergency Dial 1-866-856-3247**

THE TOWNSHIP OF MINDEN HILLS
IN SEASON, EVERY SEASON

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

December 11 – Regular Council Meeting

December 15 – Special Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

SNOW REMOVAL

Section 181 of the Ontario Highway Traffic Act states:
No person shall deposit snow or ice on a roadway without permission in writing so to do from the Ministry or the road authority responsible for the maintenance of the road. R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8, s. 181.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

• A selection of artwork from the Agnes Jamieson Gallery's permanent collection, as well as new acquisitions, is now on display. The Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am – 4 pm. All are welcome. Admission is by donation.
• Join the UFO's (UnFinished Objects Craft Group) in the Welch Room on Friday, December 12 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. All are welcome!

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

NOTICE OF 2026 BUDGET MEETINGS

Take Notice that there will be a Special meeting of Council and Public Meeting held on December 15, 2025 at 9:00 AM. The purpose of the meetings is to review and discuss the 2026 Mayoral Budget. **Members of the public may access the agenda and Budget materials on December 10, 2025.** Please visit our website for further details.

DROP-IN HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The drop-in holiday schedule for the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena is available online and at the arena Front Desk. Check out the activities available from December 21 to January 4, 2026.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Municipal Office (7 Milne St.), Fire Office and Public Works Office:
• December 24th 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
• CLOSED December 25th – January 1st
• Minden Hills Cultural Centre / Agnes Jamieson Gallery (176 Bobcaygeon Rd.)
• CLOSED December 24th – January 1st
SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena (55 Parkside St.)
• December 24th 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
• December 31st 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
• CLOSED December 25th, December 26th, and January 1st.
• Regular operating hours December 27th - December 30th
Waste Disposal Sites
• Regular winter hours
• ALL SITES CLOSED December 25th and January 1st.
Regular operating hours resume on Friday, January 2, 2026.
Visit our website for more information.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Township of Minden Hills is seeking interest from local service organizations who wish to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Township for the collection of alcohol containers at a Waste Disposal Site, starting May 1, 2026. The deadline to submit notice of interest is December 22, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. Follow our social media for more details or email waste@mindenhills.ca for more information and to submit your notice.

7 Milne Street, PO Box 359, Minden, ON K0M 2K0 705-286-1260 Toll Free: 1-844-277-1260 Fax 705-286-4917 Township.Minden.Hills Minden Hills@twpmindenhills @Township_MindenHills

Helping Hands

The Dysart fire department spent the day on Saturday outside Glecoff's in Haliburton, collecting toys, food, and donations for the holidays. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

Auxiliary police members collected food in front of Foodland in Haliburton as a part of their annual Fill a Cruiser campaign.

The Minden Hills Fire Department was all smiles in the snow on Sunday for their annual toy and food drive. From left, Mason Marano, Tara Lawrence, Sparky the Fire Dog, Jordan Hunt, Jeff Martin, Steph Hertel, John Stephenson, and Caroline Dupuis all kept warm while raising money for the Minden Community Food Centre and collecting donations. /THOMAS SMITH staff

The Fill a Cruiser campaign was active across the county, with auxiliary police staff collecting donations in front of the Minden Foodland on Saturday afternoon. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Made in Canada

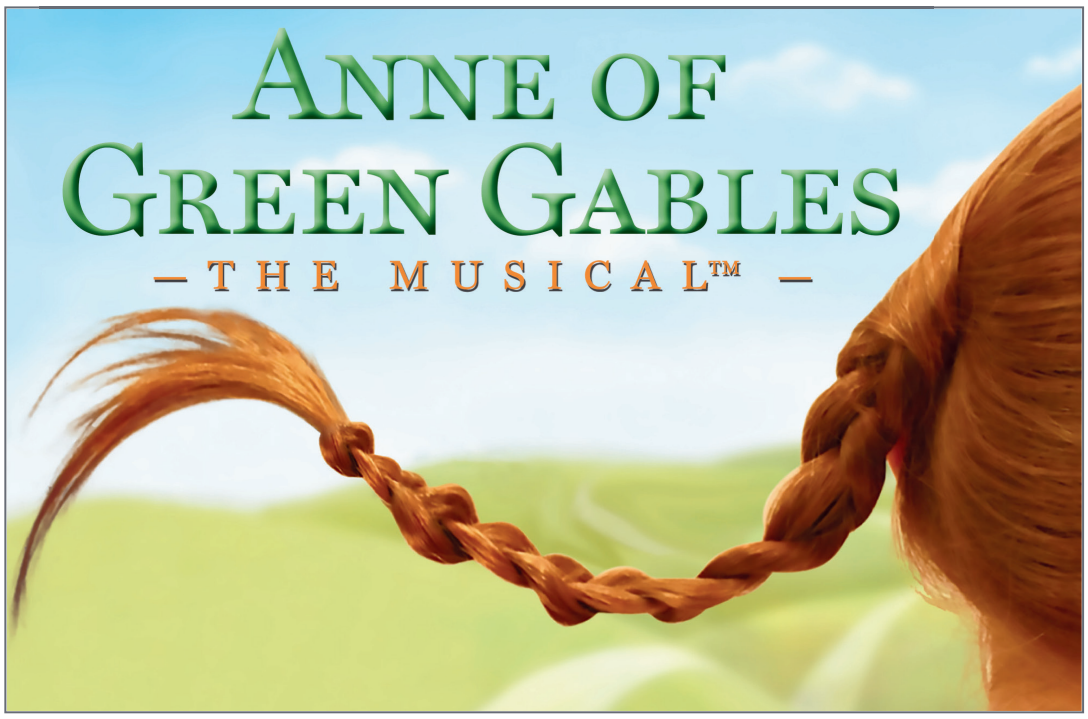
HSF

Live Theatre!

2026

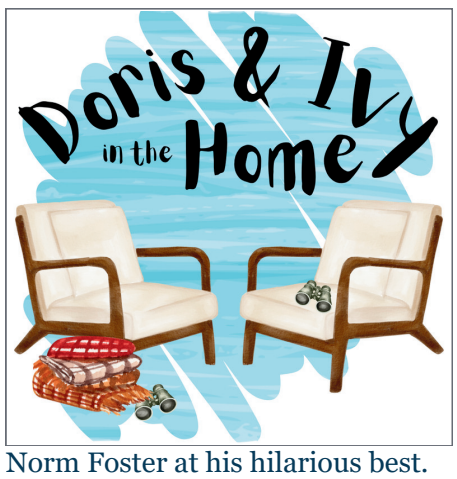
Highlands Summer Festival

HSF brings you a MADE IN CANADA season!



What could be more Canadian than the plucky Anne, winning hearts and taking names. Find out why this glorious adaptation is the longest-running annual musical theatre production.

June 29-July 8, ages 7 and up

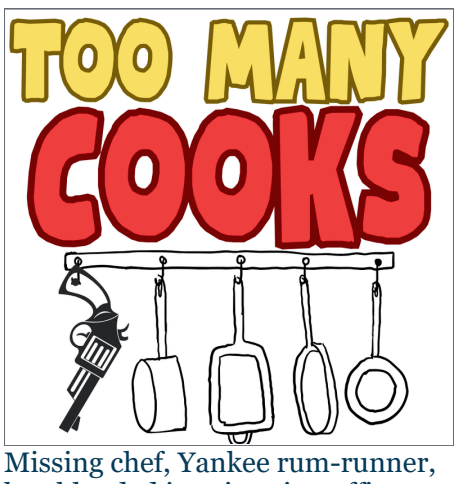


Norm Foster at his hilarious best. Love, gossip, and sex behind the compost heap.

July 13-20, ages 13 and up

Fabián Arciniegas takes you on a journey through the beauty and resilience of the human spirit.

July 21-23, ages 13 and up



Missing chef, Yankee rum-runner, hot-blooded immigration officer and teetotalling Mountie.

July 27-31, ages 13 and up

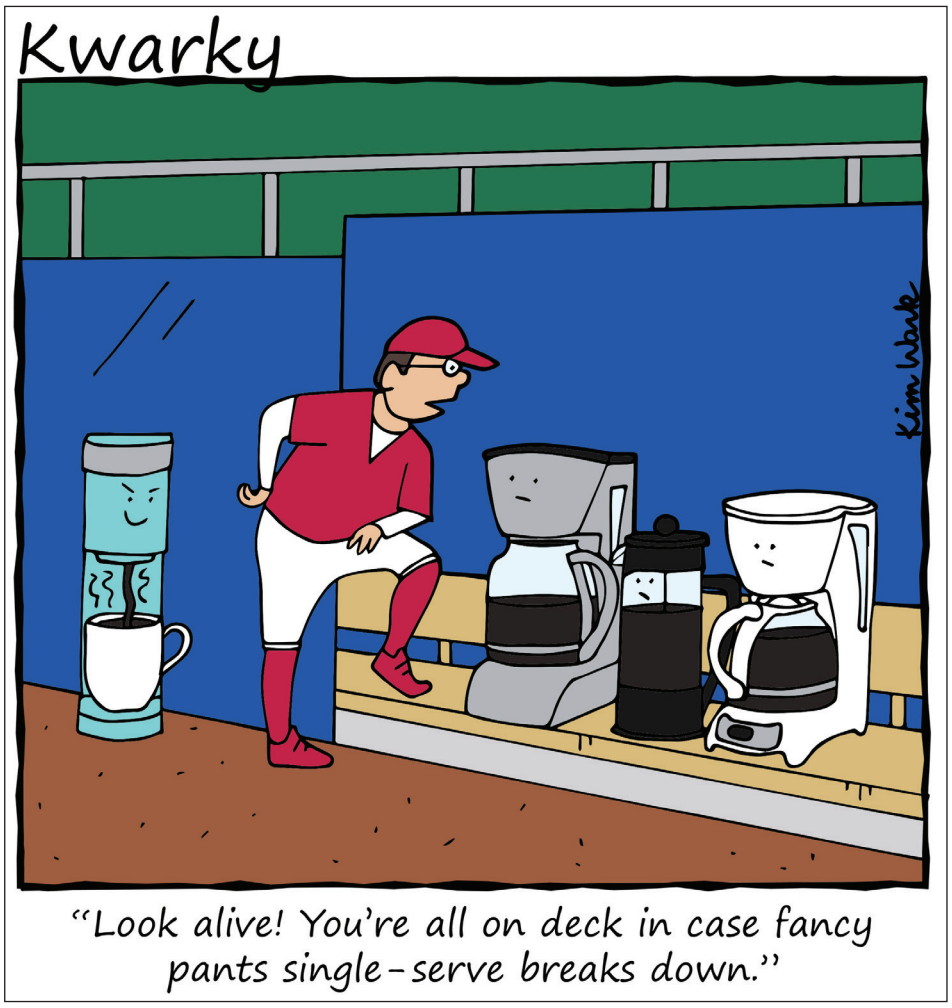
Back by popular demand! Leisa Way & the Wayward Wind Band celebrate the music of legendary artists.

August 2-6, ages 13 and up

This season offers a collection of classics, hidden gems, old favourites and new explorations.
It's a fully Made in Canada season and it's one hundred percent great entertainment.

Season Passes make the perfect Christmas gift!
All five shows - $175.00

Order online
HighlandsSummerFestival.on.ca
or by phone
705-457-9933 or 1-855-457-9933



Brought to you by

SUDOKU

		4			8			
		6	1			2		5
		9	7					
6						5		
2		5	9				6	
	8			3				1
	5						7	2
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7								

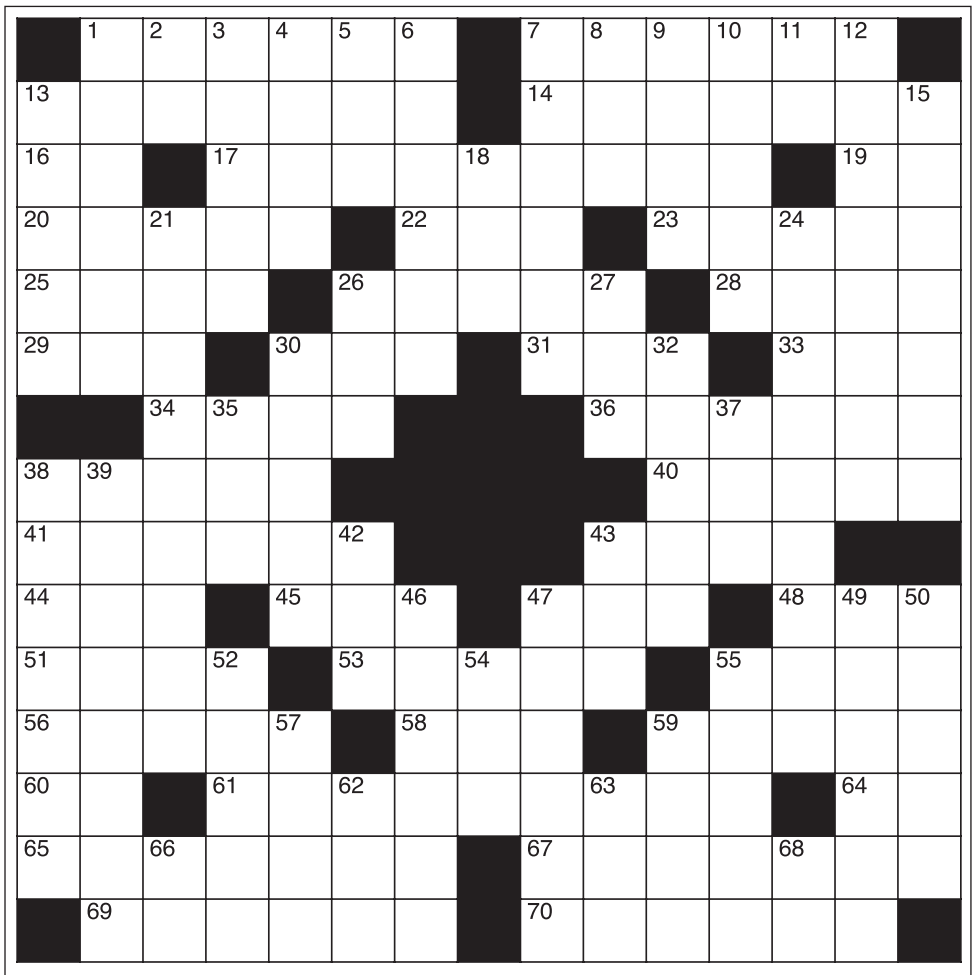
Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 19



CLUES ACROSS
1. Spiritual leaders
7. A type of solution
13. Fortified wine
14. Edible mollusk
16. They precede C
17. A way to compare
19. Government lawyer
20. "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
22. The eighth month (abbr.)
23. Very willing
25. __ ex Machina
26. Makes happy
28. Type of berry
29. A doctrine
30. Popular Dodge truck model
31. Dekagram
33. Naturally occurring solid
34. Company officer
36. Villains
38. Cricket frogs
40. Influential German psychologist
41. Endured
43. A female domestic
44. You can get stuck in one
45. Cigarette (slang)
47. Fiber optics network
48. Group of blood disorders (abbr.)
51. Employee stock ownership plan
53. Belonging to the bottom layer
55. Sound
56. MLB legend Hank
58. Very attractive person
59. Late beloved sportscaster Craig
60. South Dakota
61. Mocking
64. Symbol for gold
65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
67. Humor
69. Shawl
70. Preliminary patient assessment

CLUES DOWN
1. Animal disease
2. Commercial
3. Necklace material
4. Containers
5. A way to save for your future
6. Colorado Heisman winner Rashaan
7. Dipped down
8. Head injury (abbr.)
9. Lay about
10. Intestinal
11. Opposite of yes
12. Caused to be loved
13. Spiritual leader of Islam
15. Businesslike
18. Not in
21. Number above the line in a fraction
24. An animal with its own day
26. Pouch
27. Swedish krona
30. Start over
32. Field flowers
35. Fourteen
37. A visual way to interact with a computer
38. Up-to-date
39. Campaigns
42. Touch lightly
43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
46. Violent seizure of property
47. Supporter of the Pope
49. Anxiety
50. Body fluid
52. One who's faking it
54. Title of respect
55. Chilean city
57. City in central Japan
59. Silk garment
62. A form of dance
63. Automobile
66. The man
68. Justice Dept. head honcho

Answers on page 19

Gifts galore

The 6th Annual Haliburton Winter Fair at Castle Antiques took place over the weekend, where dozens of vendors showcased their holiday gift ideas during the three-day event. /ADAM FRISK staff

HCPL plans seasonal events

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

The snow is flying across the county and winter holidays are right around the corner.

To get you into the festive spirit, Haliburton County Public Library (HCPL) has devised a smorgasbord of holiday and seasonally-themed activities for the entire family.

The greatest part of their programming? It is entirely free to participate.

While the programs are run by the library, a library card is not necessary to participate.

Holiday events will be taking place at HCPL branches across the county.

"As we head into the holiday season, I really wanted to make a special effort to celebrate the many different traditions that happen during December. I believe it's so important for children to be exposed to a variety of cultures and celebrations," said Shawna Gamblen, outreach and programming coordinator for the HCPL. "Even if they don't personally know someone who observes them. Learning about the different ways families celebrate around the world helps build empathy, acceptance, and a sense of belonging in our community."

Gamblen says that after she moved to Minden from Toronto, she missed the visibility of the various cultural holidays and events that happened in her neighbourhood.

Offering a wide range of events, from Hanukkah and Kwanzaa storytimes, to felting, and a glow stick program in the winter solstice are all efforts to celebrate the richness and diversity of the County and to celebrate the community in a meaningful way.

Hanukkah Storytime

The first holiday-themed event for December is a Hanukkah Storytime held at the Dysart branch of the HCPL on Dec. 13.

The HCPL has a plethora of Hanukkah themed books to share with visitors. Gamblen says that some fun favourites include *Meet the Latkes* and *10 Things I Love About Hanukkah*.

"They're perfect for sharing at storytime," said Gamblen.

The Hanukkah Storytime event will include singing a song about latkes, reading stories, and making festive crafts together.

"A local Jewish volunteer has also shared insights about what Hanukkah looks like in their home, and I'm excited to pass along those traditions so families can learn and connect," said Gamblen.

Older youth will be able to participate with the STEAM station that will be running all day. At the station, youth will be able to create their own light up menorah.

The Hanukkah Storytime event will be happening at the Dysart location of the HCPL on Saturday Dec. 13 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Death Cafe

For many, the holidays are emotionally heavy. While some gather with their family, for others, the holidays are constant reminders of grief and pain. With mental health issues resurfacing in the winter, the HCPL is offering a Death Cafe for people to come together in support of each other this month.

Gamblen says that the purpose of the Death Cafe is to "provide a gentle, supportive space for anyone who needs it."

The Death Cafe will provide warm drinks, delicious treats, and an open floor for conversation. The event will be run by Amanda Lytle, local death doula and educator. There will be conversations of loss, death, and mortality in a space without stigma or taboo.

With plenty of resources to help people experiencing loss, the library encourages participants to check out their support resources.

The Death Cafe will be happening on Dec. 13 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Dysart branch of the HCPL.

Snowman Felting

A first for the HCPL branches, snowman felting was introduced at the beginning of December as part of their festive programming.

The event has occurred twice this month already to tremendous success, says Gamblen.

Needle felting is one of HCPL's most popular programs at their libraries. Allowing up to 15 participants, the needle felting snowmen activities fill up quickly.

Many familiar faces to the felting activity return month after month, says Gamblen. They have a dedicated group of felters that are always looking for new friendly faces.

The needle felting kits are supplied by the Government of Ontario through the Seniors Active Living Centre Grant.

"All supplies will be provided, and every participant will head home with their own charming needle-felted snowman they design themselves," said Gamblen.

There will be two more snowman felting events. The next will be on Dec. 10 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Minden Hills Branch. The final snowman felting event will be on Dec. 19 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Dorset Branch.

While participation slots fill up fast, there is often a waitlist you can be put on.

Jingle Bells Storytime

The last Friday storytime event of the year will be Jingle Bells themed.

"Our storytime team has been busy choosing special December stories to share during Friday storytimes," said Gamblen. "We're especially excited to bring out our brand-new jingle bell bracelet props for everyone to shake along with."

The event will be a cozy and memorable family-oriented event. Don't forget your vocal warm ups for this sing-along activity. Festive songs will be sung, holiday stories will be shared, and there will be plenty of ring-ting-tingling of bells!

Families are greatly encouraged to wear their festive outfits. After the storytime event, there will be a seasonal craft for youth to complete and take home to hang on your Christmas tree.

Jingle Bells Storytime will be taking place at the Dysart branch of the HCPL on Dec. 19 from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Glow Stick giveaway: Celebrate the Solstice

Another first for the HCPL, this year's holiday festivities will include a celebration of the winter solstice. As it is the longest night in the Northern Hemisphere, the winter solstice has held great significance in cultures throughout the world.

The glow stick giveaway idea stemmed from Gamblen's mother.

"Each December, she puts together advent sacks for her grandchildren, and on the winter solstice she always includes a glow stick to bring a little extra light to the longest night of the year," said Gamblen.

Now a yearly tradition in the Gamblen household, her kids go to bed with a glowstick glowing beside them.

"I wanted our community to feel that same sense of light and warmth during these dark, chilly nights," said Gamblen. "When families pop in to check out our resources, they can bring home a glow stick as a small reminder that brighter days are on the way."

With the wide range of cultural celebrations of the winter solstice, the glow stick giveaway and winter solstice celebration is for everyone. The significance of the glow stick connects families to Mother Nature and to honour ancient traditions over thousands of years.

Glow sticks will be available to be picked up by families from Dec. 16 to Dec. 26 at all HCPL branch locations.

Winter Craft Table

Winter craft tables will be ready to use across all HCPL branches this winter. Packed with ready-to-go crafting kits, families can visit throughout the day to complete a craft together.

"Everything from snowflakes and gingerbread people to reindeer, snowmen, and seasonal colouring sheets," said Gamblen.

The crafts provide a hands-on and creative activity for all to enjoy. Winter craft tables will be available to use on Dec. 20, 23, 27, and 30

Kwanzaa Storytime

For Kwanzaa storytime, youth will read My Kwanzaa Wish by Canadian author Yolanda T. Marshall. For this event, youth will also enjoy Kwanzaa themed songs and fingerplays together. A craft for families will be available and a small display of cultural items can be explored.

Kwanzaa is a holiday that originated in the Black community whose name comes from the Swahili saying *matunda ya kwana* or "first fruits". The creator of the holiday, Maulana Karenga was inspired to create an alternative holiday to Christmas and to celebrate both Black culture and Black history.

Keranga was inspired by the "first fruit" festivals celebrated by the Zulu. These harvest festivals can be traced back to ancient civilizations.

"It's a fun, welcoming experience for families and a wonderful way for children to learn how Kwanzaa is celebrated," said Gamblen.

In the cold of winter and through its darkest days, these holiday events bring extra light and joy to the community, she said.

Check out the HCPL's calendar of events on their website haliburtonlibrary.ca. Their seasonal events are the perfect way for you to learn something new, celebrate the holidays, and receive support from your local community.

Plus, you can get into the holiday spirit, just like Gamblen.

"I'm one of those people who loves the snow," said Gamblen. "I adore the way the trees look when they're covered in white, the soft pink sunrises on crisp mornings, and sledding with my children."

Kindness, quirkiness and more great music is on the way

December's film for Those Other Movies is *The Baltimorons*. It has been billed as a "warm and cozy comedy" and also a "hidden gem". It will be showing on December 11 at 4:15 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion. It includes some unexpected twists and shows the real challenges of supporting friends and loved ones who are living with mental health issues. The story takes place over 24 hours from Christmas Eve through to Christmas Day. Starring Michael Strassner and Liz Larsen, the strong characters will pull you into an evening of adventure that is driven by hope, kindness and optimism.

We will march into the new year with a bang with the film *The Marching Band* on Thursday, January 8. This film, shot in the north of France tells the story of an acclaimed orchestra conductor who, while seeking a bone marrow donor to treat leukaemia finds out that he has a brother. The two men live entirely different lives, but they manage to find connections through music. The director, Emmanuel Courcol found a local marching band to play in the movie. The Those Other Movies committee and film circuit groups from across Canada give this film top marks and are excited to kick off 2026 with the screening of this film.

Tickets are just $10 (cash at the door), thanks to our generous sponsors.

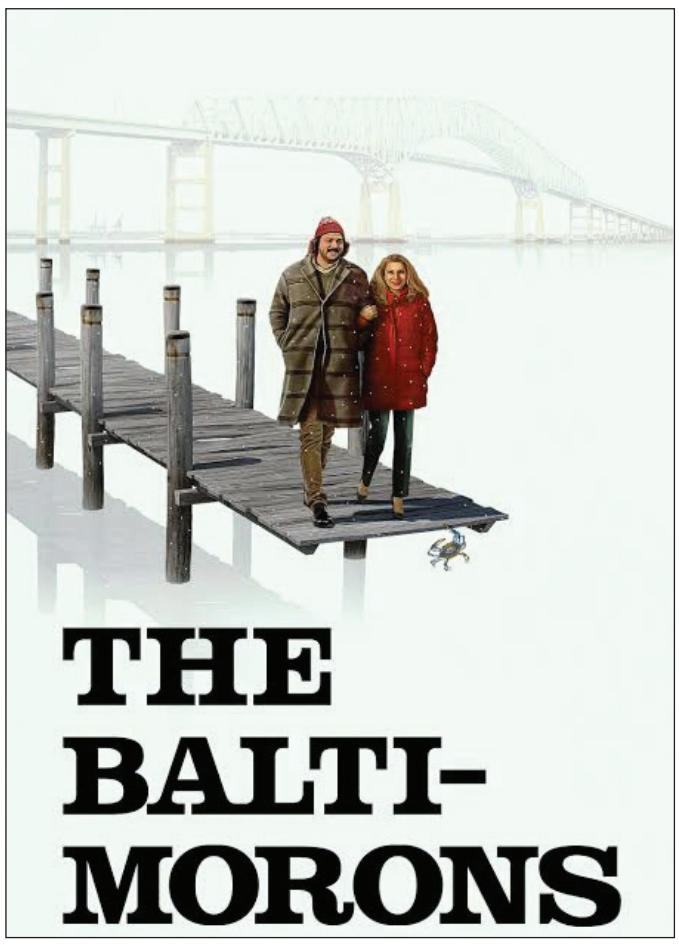
Looking ahead:

Hold February 12 and March 12 for our winter movies, titles to be confirmed.

Purchase your Doc(k) Day ticket for a full day of thought-provoking documentaries on Saturday, April 11, 2026 on our website: www.thoseothermovies.com. Lineup will be announced in the new year.

For more information, contact: thoseothermovies@gmail.com.

Submitted



SALC programming a huge success

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

Painting lessons have been offered as part of SALC programming at the Wilberforce Legion. To see the calendar for SALC offerings, take a look at the community calendar on Haliburton County's website. /Submitted.

For those not in the know, seniors have new ways to get active and in the community this year. This July, Haliburton County became a part of the Seniors Active Living Centre program (SALC) in Ontario.

"SALC programs are designed to help older adults improve their health and well-being through social, cultural, educational and recreational programs," said Sue Tiffin, director of community outreach.

Joining the SALC program supports regular operating costs in ways that promote active and healthy living, social engagement, and learning for seniors by providing activities and services, says Tiffin.

"Despite Haliburton County having a high senior demographic, we didn't have a SALC in place," she said.

After the recommendation from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility's regional development advisor and local groups and organizations, Haliburton County took the lead on applying for the grant.

Haliburton County Council approved staff to submit an application to the province's program expansion. At that time, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility provided support for 315 SALCs throughout Ontario.

Despite the confusing name of the program, SALC programming offers activities and events throughout Haliburton County.

To increase accessibility, a majority of the programs are free to attend, or by a donation. SALC programming and events can be utilized by County residents aged 55+. Some special programs are intergenerational.

With SALC programming taking place in each of the county's four municipalities, you can attend SALC programming anywhere.

Tiffin says the most common programmers in the County include our local Legions, the Haliburton County Public Library, Abbey Gardens, SIRCH, the Haliburton County Master Gardeners, the Haliburton Highlands Genealogy Group, Aging Together as Community, and our municipalities.

While devising the new programming, county staff met with programmers to get feedback on what programming is needed. Common activities included fitness, and past programs that relied on grant funding. SALC programming is iterative and will morph and change depending on the needs and desires from the community. To do this, feedback from the public will be needed.

"The programmers planning activities and events have been instrumental in ensuring this program is successful," said Tiffin. "We really hoped to offer at least one program a week, but instead the calendar is consistently quite full with what we hope is something for everyone."

Some of the programming that has been offered already includes learning how to play disc golf, fitness classes, guided walks, cooking classes, painting classes, genealogy workshops, first aid courses, forest bathing, and both board game and card social drop-ins.

The county has also offered information session webinars on bone health, winter driving, and how to view the Haliburton Highlands Digital Archives.

Only part of the SALC programming is funded by the Ontario government. The remaining 20 per cent of the bill is footed by our local municipalities who want to support the programming. "It has been truly wonderful to hear stories of folks meeting each other, connecting or reconnecting, and experiencing programs together even if they showed up alone," said Tiffin.

One participant told Tiffin that she had spent many years as a caregiver. Now, at the age of 80, she is finally participating in the SALC programs and taking time for herself.

"I hope everyone can take the opportunity to experience something new, different, or that they've put aside for other obligations throughout the years, especially to help combat feelings of isolation or loneliness that we know can impact our mental and physical health," said Tiffin. "When we hear of people staying after the program to continue a chat, or bringing a neighbour along to a new program, that's the community and togetherness we're looking to help nurture with this program."

With the SALC programming, older-aged residents are able to try something new, learn, and develop new friendships. It is not uncommon for participants to stick around after their program to hang out and chat, says Tiffin. "We've heard that people didn't realize how creative they could be until they picked up a paintbrush," she said.

"Its wonderful to see so many people coming out for the classes and some people that have done more than one and seeing their skills have improved," said Connie Rees. "I am very happy that our Legion Branch 624 Wilberforce has had this opportunity and hope we have more to come. Being a small community, it is great to see people connecting and being social."

Angela Kruger, executive director of Abbey Gardens says that the SALC programming fits nicely into their pillars of environmental restoration, local food systems, and community education.

"The SALC programs have been remarkably successful for Abbey Gardens, and we received great feedback," reports Kruger.

Abbey Gardens offered learning forest bathing, an intro to disc golf, mindful meditations, and qi gong lessons.

"Not only did SALC bring community members to Abbey Gardens that might not have visited us before, but it offers economic benefits to the community through the engagement of local program facilitators to run the specialized programs," said Kruger. Many participants who visited for the SALC programming purchased a snack or coffee from their Food Hub. All money earned at the Food Hubs goes back into the community and restoring our environment.

The 2025-2026 SALC program runs until March 2026. At that time, Haliburton County will be applying to the program again for the 2026-2027 season. With full support by Haliburton County and the grant's approval in perpetuity, the community programming will continue as long as programmers and residents are interested. Check the County's calendar for future SALC programming and support programs in our local libraries, nonprofits, and community buildings.

For as long as the programming and events are used, they will continue to benefit you.

SALC offerings can be found on the county calendar on myhaliburtonhighlands.com under their "What's Happening" tab.

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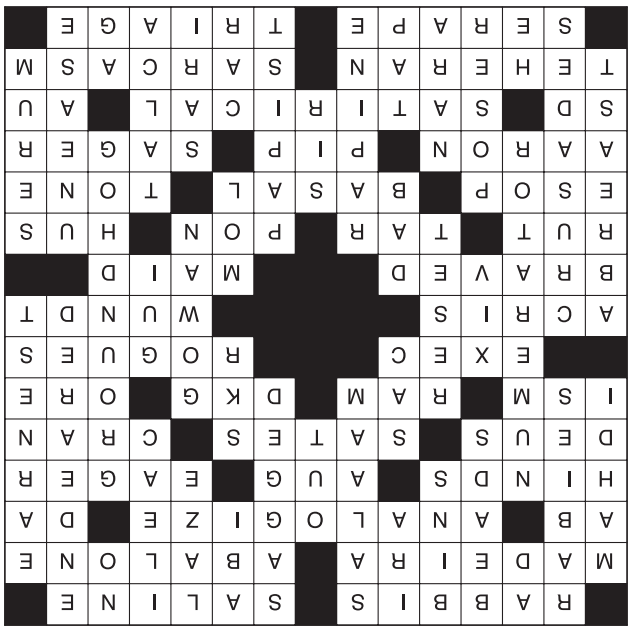

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Corporation of the County of Haliburton Requires a Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator

Under the oversight of the Director, this vacant full-time position conducts research and supports program outcomes through the application of cross-sector partnerships, collective impact planning and principles, and community engagement and training. Further, this position supports the communication efforts of community service providers to raise awareness among residents of available support programs.

The successful applicant will have completed post-secondary education in a related discipline and possess a minimum four years of progressive experience. Applicants with a comparable combination of education and experience will also be considered.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a more detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than January 2, 2026, at 4:30pm.

We thank all who apply for this position; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,* the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

Employment Opportunity
Municipality of Dysart et al

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Reporting to the Operation Manager the successful applicant will have sound knowledge and methods, tools, and equipment required for the general maintenance of the municipal road system including bridges, culverts, drainage, and other roads / property. Primary duties include, but not limited to operations of a sidewalk plow, dump truck (with sander/snowplow), backhoe, loader and grader.

Self-motivated applicants must be able to work outdoors in all weather with minimal supervision. A valid Ontario 'A' or 'D' licence (manual) with 'Z' endorsement is required along with an acceptable abstract. Pursuant to CUPE Local #2142 the rate of pay is $28.88 per hour based on a 40-hour work week. Pension and Benefits after a 6-month probationary period.

Upon final selection, the applicant will be required to provide, at their own expense, a Criminal Record and Judicial Matters check from the Ontario Provincial Police or appropriate police force.

The detailed job description is available on our website www.dysartetal.ca/careers
Interested individuals are invited to email a detailed resume and cover letter to:
Sonja Marx, HR Manager
hr@dysartetal.ca
No Later Than 4:00 pm Friday December 12th, 2025.

*** We thank all who apply; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodations for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes. ***

BOARD MEMBERS

Haliburton County Council is seeking members of the public for Haliburton County Library Board

The County of Haliburton benefits from the involvement of local residents who help County Council make decisions about the Library programs and services provided to our citizens. Applicants for this position must be:

- At least 18 years old
- A Canadian Citizen
- A resident of Haliburton County

As a Board Member you will be an advocate of the library's impact on the community and be prepared to take an active and responsible role in the governance and policymaking of the Board.

You can find the detailed posting along with application instructions on our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers

If you require assistance with the application process please contact Andrea Brown, Library CEO/Chief Librarian at info@haliburtonlibrary.ca.

The application process will close on December 19, 2025, at noon.

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Anne Elizabeth Lampman

Passed away peacefully at the Lakeridge Health, Oshawa on Sunday, November 30, 2025, at the age of 81.

Beloved wife of Bruce Lampman. Dear mother of Todd Held of Smithvillle, Debra Held of Vancouver, Michael Lampman (Diane) of Hamilton, Blake Lampman (Nicole) of Smithville. Loving Nanny to Aiden, Taylor, Brice, Derek and to her many great grandchildren. Dear sister of Mary Hamilton of Alliston.

It was Anne's wish for cremation and Private Family Arrangements.

Memorial Donations to Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

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www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

Heather Sleightholm (nee Switzer)

(Resident of Elliot Lake)

Heather Loreen Sleightholm (nee Switzer) passed away peacefully, surrounded by family, on Sunday, November 30th, at the age of 77.

Born on May 21, 1948, in Gooderham, she was the youngest daughter of Wilbert and Alberta Switzer. Heather attended Haliburton High School before moving to Toronto. She lived a life rooted in faith, expressing her beliefs daily through her integrity.

Heather was the beloved wife and best friend of Brent Sleightholm. She was a loving mother to twin daughters Kelly Hines and Stacey Hines, and son Christoper (Chris) Hines (Jaime). She also leaves behind her cherished fur babies, Bella (dog) and Angel (cat).

She will be remembered for her love of engaging political discussions (especially while watching Fox News), navigating her favorite social media apps like TikTok, and creating content for her local Elliot Lake community Facebook page.

Heather was the loving sister of Effie McPherson, Ruby Billings, and the late Hazel Maxwell, and a beloved aunt to many nieces and nephews.

Visitation & Funeral Service

Community Funeral Home

www.communityfuneralhomes.com

Friends and family were invited to call at the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy. #118, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209, on Monday, December 8, 2025, at 12:00 (Noon) for a service in the Chapel (Visitation 2 hours prior). As an expression of your sympathy, flowers are more than encouraged.

Luella Madill (nee Hogan)

Peacefully, surrounded by family, at Extendicare Haliburton on Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025, in her 90th year. Beloved wife of the late Alfred Madill. Loving mother of Mary Ann Strickland (Charlie). Fondly remembered by her grandchildren, Megan, Riley, and Jordan. Luella was the youngest of 13 children born to Tom and Mary Ann Hogan.

Dear sister of Viola (Jimmy – Predeceased) and sister-in-law of Faye (Walter – predeceased). Predeceased by her siblings Bernie, Ewart (Luella), Clem (Dorothy), Alphonse (Mabel), Irene (Roy), Julia (Tommy), Marie (Emmerson), Bridget (Jack), Leo (Faye), Mike (Lorraine), and M.J. Also predeceased by her brothers-in-law Willy (Hazel), Ross (Dolly), and Gordon (Ruby) and her sister-in-law Ruby Alden (Harold).

Born on July 1, 1936, in Highland Grove, Luella happily spent her whole life in the Haliburton Highlands. Luella lived a life deeply rooted in her faith; she was a proud and devoted member of the St. Anthony of Padua Mission Church in Haliburton for many years. She could often be found playing Bingo, crocheting, or spending time with her family. Luella was an animal lover, most notably when it came to cats and dogs. She especially loved going out to restaurants for dinner, even if she often spoiled her appetite with chips beforehand. Luella's warmth, love for life and family, and the ability to bring joy to those around her will never be forgotten

Visitation & Funeral Mass

Friends and family are invited to call at the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy. #118 Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209 on Tuesday morning, December 9, 2025, for a Visitation from 11 – 12 (noon) (Rosary prayers will take place at 10:30). A Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 12:30 pm at **ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION** CHURCH 27 Victoria St. Haliburton, ON. As an expression of sympathy, donations in Luella's memory can be made to St. Anthony of Padua Mission Church or the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation.

Community Funeral Home

www.communityfuneralhomes.com

In Loving Memory of

Grahame Wales

With profound sadness and gratitude for a life well lived, the family of Grahame Wales announces his peaceful death on December 4, 2025 at the age of 78.

Grahame was born on May 4, 1947 in Dorking, England and immigrated to Toronto at 6 months of age with his parents Esme Wales and Ian Neilson and sister, Margaret.

Grahame grew up in Toronto, and studied Fish and Wildlife at Sir Sandford Fleming College. In 1976, he and Debbie married and moved to Minden where he worked for several years with the Ministry of Natural Resources and The Leslie Frost Centre. In 1992 he decided to work full time in their pottery studio, Earth and Fire Pottery. He soon became known as The Hairy Potter, and loved to sit at the wheel, regaling visitors with funny stories and bad jokes. He was able to work in the studio until shortly before his death.

To know Grahame was to love him. He was kind, generous, smart, creative, and hilarious - he made everyone feel special. He was well-travelled and loved an adventure, but most of all he loved being home–in the house he and Debbie built from logs milled from their own property–where he could cook elaborate meals and watch the birds from his favourite easy chair.

He will be greatly missed by Debbie (nee Tisdall), his wife of 49 years; his children Jenn (Darren) and Josh (Walter); his beloved grandchildren Adiya, Keetyn, Luca, and Leo; his special sister Margaret (Ron) Story and brother-in-law to Cathy (Don) Tisdall, Liz (Art) Bloomfield, Michael (Jan) Tisdall and Anne (John) Nagel, as well as many close relatives; and his wonderful friends, who were, to him, like family. Nothing made him happier than being surrounded by loved ones – at home, in his studio, or at his favourite place in the world, the family cottage on Red Pine Lake.

In lieu of flowers, if you so choose, donations can be made to H.A.V.E.: Help a Village Effort (helpavillageeffort.org/donate), Food for Kids Haliburton (foodforkids.ca/support-us), Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (hhhs.ca/foundation) or a charity close to your heart. A celebration of life will be held on January 10th, 2026 at Bonnie View Inn.

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Coboconk, Minden OPP to amalgamate

By Andrew Milne

The Coboconk and Minden OPP detachments will be amalgamated as of April, 1996.

Minden staff sergeant Dennis Edlington made the announcement December 7 to members of county council, at a 'visioning retreat' council called to make long range plans and to deal with challenges spinning out of recent reductions to local government transfer payment levels.

Edlington could not say yet where the new, amalgamated detachment's headquarters would be located. Much would depend, he says, on the movements of other government agencies expected to be closed or relocated in the next few months.

Staffing reductions should affect one position only — one of the two detachment commanders, says Edlington, will be phased out.

Edlington also said he does not expect the move is likely to force moves upon officers' families.

"We're looking," said Edlington, "at probably the biggest amalgamation or clustering in the province, because we're dealing with about 25 different townships, practically all of Haliburton county with the exception of Cardiff-Bicroft, and now we're looking at the addition of Longford, Laxton, Digby, Somerville, possibly Cavendish townships as well. All that would be managed out of one administrative centre."

Edlington also said he believes that the force will be able to adapt to the change, and continue to deliver quality service to its communities. Community policing initiatives put into place over the last few years are also amenable to the change, he said.

Said Edlington, "I don't see all the officers reporting to one facility to go to work... My personal vision is that the officers will report to work within the communities that they want to work in... Your communities are our first interest, but we have to serve your communities with the resources that we have. I hope to sit down with each and every reeve before this is finalized and make sure we are serving you as well as we possibly can."

He also said some difficulties were going to present themselves, in the case of communities especially remote from the new headquarters.

Said Edlington, "Depending on where the administrative centre is when this all washes out, there are going to be some communities on the fringes of these areas, and we're going to have to sit down and make some tough decisions as to where we can best serve you from."

Edlington also said that the community policing concept, along with improved communications between detachments in an era in which police have to be increasingly interdependent between jurisdictions, is already proving its worth, even in the absence of 24 hour coverage. He cited the case of a recent burglary/cigarette raid in Haliburton village.

(more on page 2)

OPP Constables Rob Orlowski and Terry Allore are seen here with a stack of cigarettes recovered from a break-in at the Haliburton Valu-Mart. Charged in conjunction with the break-in were Kevin Boissoneau and Clayton Hynes, both 21, of Sault Ste. Marie. See story on page 10.

Effect on Haliburton campus still unknown

Sir Sandford Fleming cuts staff, courses

By Andrew Milne

The president of Sir Sandford Fleming College announced last week that 13 of its 85 programs would be discontinued immediately, following budget cuts handed down by the provincial government.

The college announced that there would be layoffs associated with the cuts as well. The announcement was made December 7.

None of the programs cut were given at the Haliburton campus. However, the campus will in all likelihood see some of the layoffs.

The college is announcing a financial "emergency" to set in motion the associated layoffs.

Students currently enroled in the programs cut will be able to complete their diplomas at Sir Sandford. Additional admissions to the programs, however, will be discontinued starting September 1, 1996.

A union representative for the staff described the cuts as a 'horrendous' attack on the community, and on national values, and expressed dismay that opposition to the moves is being kept off balance by the speed of the government's actions on this and other fronts.

The cuts were part of the 20 per cent reduction in provincial transfer payments to community colleges announced by the government November 29.

President Brian Desbiens told *The Times* December 8 that the earliest possible layoffs would occur in January.

Haliburton campus principal Barb Bolin

(more on page 6)

Timothy Heming Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year

Former Achie Stouffer Elementary School student Timothy Heming, the son of Laurie and Rob Heming, has been selected to receive the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award. The selection was announced Friday by the co-ordinating body, the Ontario Community Newspapers Association. The award is sponsored by Bell Canada.

Tim was nominated by a former neighbour, Sheri Hawkins, with letters of endorsement and support provided by the educational assistants and teachers at the school who worked with him, friends and relatives. The nomination was made through *The Times* (Earlier this fall, Tim and his family moved to Huntsville.)

Eleven year old Tim has spina bifida and hydrociphalus, two conditions which have resulted in numerous surgical interventions and spending all of his life in a wheel chair. Despite the consequences of these conditions, Tim has always been a cheerful and outgoing individual. It was his indomitable spirit and the example he set for others by living life to the fullest, despite what others may see as handicaps, which prompted the nomaination and immediately found support among all teachers and staff at Archie Stouffer Elementary School.

The Times will have a full report on Tim's award in next week's edition.

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Huskies Hockey

The Haliburton County Huskies dominated the North York Rangers on Saturday with a score of 4-1. The next home game is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 18 against Oakville. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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